

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AID-20 OMB-01 DPW-01 EUR-25 IO-12

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9842

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5922

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT MILI VS

SUBJECT: WEEKLY SITREP, 1 APR. - 8 APR. 1973

FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM AMCONSUL CAN THO BEING REPEATED

QUOTE

CAN THO 0144

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, MARR, CA, VS

SUBJECT: WEEKLY SITREP, 1 APRIL - 8 APRIL 1973

1. SUMMARY: THE BATTLE FOR HONG NGU REACHED A NEW HIGH POINT, AND ACTIVITY FLARED UP AGAIN IN DINH TUONG AND CHUONG THIEN MAKING THIS WEEK ONE OF THE BLOODIEST SINCE THE CEASEFIRE. THE FIGHTING CAUSED THE ICCS TO PULL OUT OF HONG NGU, BUT THE PULLOUT RANKS AS A MINOR IRRITANT TO THE ICCS, FACED AS IT IS WITH GROWING DISSENSION WITHIN ITS OWN RANKS. APART FROM THE BATTLE AREAS, BOTH COMMUNIST AND GVN ACTIVITIES REMAINED LOW-KEY. BOTH SIDES BEGAN REALIGNING SOME FORCES IN THE SOUTHEAST-ERN DELTA. A BAC LIEU CAMBODIAN MONK'S ASSASSINATION MAY CAUSE SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS FOR THE GVN.

2. SECURITY SITUATION:

A. MILITARY ACTIVITY INCREASED WITH AS MANY AS 82 INCIDENTS REPORTED IN ONE DAY. CASUALTIES ALSO INCREASED TO SOME OF THE HIGHEST POST- CEASEFIRE LEVELS YET RECORDED. DINH TUONG, KIEN PHONG, AND CHUONG THIEN REMAIN THE SCENES OF MOST OF THE HEAVY
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FIGHTING WITH MINOR OUTBREAKS OF UNUSUAL VIOLENCE IN THE REST OF THE DELTA.

B. MOST OF THE WEEK'S ACTIVITY IN DINH TUONG INVOLVED VC/ NVA ATTACKS BY FIRE (ABF) AGAINST OUTPOSTS ALTHOUGH THE GVN REPORTED SEVERAL SERIOUS GROUND ATTACKS. IN ONE, NOW CONFIRMED AS AN AMBUSH AND NOT AN ABF, AN RF BATTALION SUFFERED 23 KIA AND 56 WIA. REPORTED VC/ NVA LOSSES IN THE ENGAGEMENT WERE ALSO HEAVY. AFTER A MEETING OF SENIOR VC/ NVA OFFICIALS IN CHUONG THIEN (CAN THO 0118), RENEWED VC/ NVA ATTACKS BEGAN IN THAT PROVINCE APRIL 6. MOST INCIDENTS IN CHUONG THIEN WERE ABFS TO PIN DOWN ARVN TROOPS RATHER THAN ATTEMPTS TO INCREASE AREAS UNDER VC CONTROL. THE MOST SERIOUS FIGHTING OF THE WEEK WAS IN THE HONG NGU AREA. SOME INTELLIGENCE INDICATES THE VC/ NVA ARE PREPARING ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO SEIZE AN ENTRY POINT. THE GVN REPORTED SOME GROUND BATTLES IN THE AREA BUT ROCKET ATTACKS ON TAN CHAU AND HONG NGU CAUSED GREATER DAMAGE AND SPREAD FEAR AMONG THE CIVILIAN POPULACE. ACROSS THE BORDER FROM HONG NGU IN CHAU DOC PROVINCE, TAN CHAU CITY SUFFERED HEAVY CIVILIAN CASUALTIES FROM ROCKET ATTACKS. WE UNDERSTAND MR IV COMMANDER, MGEN NGHI, IS SEEKING PERMISSION TO GO ON THE OFFENSIVE TO RELIEVE THE PRESSURE ON HONG NGU (CAN THO 141).

3. ICCS:

A. THE HONG NGU SHELLING PROMPTED MGEN MCALPINE, SENIOR CANADIAN ICCS MILITARY ADVISOR, TO ORDER THE TEMPORARY REDEPLOYMENT OF THE HONG NGU ICCS TEAM TO CAO LANH APRIL 5. ONE HONG NGU ICCS TEAM WAS CONVINCED THAT A VC/ NVA GROUND ATTACK ON THE TOWN WAS IMMINENT.

B. THE CANADIAN ICCS DELEGATION GROWS INCREASINGLY FRUSTRATED WITH THE HUNGARIAN AND POLISH REFUSAL TO COOPERATE. VICE CONSULS HAVE REPORTED COMPLAINTS FROM SEVERAL SUB- REGIONAL TAMS. REGION VII CANADIANS SAY THAT THE SAIGON CANADIAN DELEGATION HAS COMPILED A LIST OF OBSTRUCTIVE TACTICS THE POLES AND HUNGARIANS ARE USING NATIONWIDE.

4. COMMUNIST ACTIVITY:

VC ELEMENTS CONTINUE TO INFILTRATE THE SOUTHERN PART OF BAC LIEU. PROPAGANDA ACTIVITY, TAXATION, AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION ARE INCREASING IN THE AREA IN APPARENT COMPLIANCE WITH THE RECENTLY CAPTURED SIX MONTH PLAN FOR VC SOC TRANG PROVINCE. (CAN THO 0131) THERE WERE ALSO INCREASED VC PROPAGANDA AND ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN VINH BINH AND CHUONG THIEN PROVINCES.

5. GVN ACTIVITIES:

MR IV CREATED A SPECIAL TACTICAL AREA STRADDLING THE BA XUYEN-CONFIDENTIAL

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BAC LIEU BORDER. THE OB CTIVE IS ENHANCED GVN MILITARY COORDINA-

TIO IN AN AREA WHERE THE VC HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY ACTIVE SINCE THE CEASEFIRE. IN ANOTHER MOVE TO COUNTER INCREASED VC ACTIVITY IN THE SOUTHERN DELTA, AN XUYEN SECTOR REQUESTED FIVE 21 ST DIVISION BATTALIONS TO CONSTRUCT OUTPOSTS IN TWO AREAS TRADITIONALLY UNDER VC INFLUENCE.

6. CAMBODIAN AFFAIRS:

A PROMINENT CAMBODIAN MONK, SON THAN, WAS ASSASSINATED IN BAC LIEU PROVINCE APRIL E. (CAN THO 133) A GRENADE INCIDENT SEVERAL HOURS LATER DURING A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN MONKS AND VILLAGE OFFICIAL

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KILLED TWO OFFICIALS AND WOUNDED TWELVE. THE BAC LIEU PROVINCE CHIEF, COL NGUYEN NHAC DIEP, MANAGED TO DEFUSE THE EXPLOSIVE SITUATION BY PAYING IMMEDIATE SOLATIUN AND PERMITTING MONKS CARRYING SON TPMN'S BODY TO MARCH TO BAC LIEU PAGODA. COL DIEP PROMISED A PROMPT AND FULL INVESTIGATION. ALTHOUGH THE GVN CLAIMS THE VC ASSASSINATED SON THAN, MOST CAMBODIANS BELIEVE GVN AGENTS KILLED HIM. THE SENIOR CAMBODIAN MONK IN THE DELTA, THACK PIECH, TOLD A VICE CONSUL APRIL 6 THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED THE SITUATION WITH PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT, LT GEN DANG VAN QUANG, WHO PROMISED A SAIGON INVESTIGATION OF THE INCIDENT.

BARNES UNQUOTE
WHITEHOUSE

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